

## MESSAGE FROM THE SENIOR EXECUTIVE TEAM

### Dear Colleagues and Students

The Senior Executive Team (SET) met today and deliberated extensively on a range of matters pertaining to Covid-2019 caused by the coronavirus and its potential impact on the Wits community in the short-, medium, and long-term. The combined proficiency and committed efforts of all members of the Wits community will be required to prevent, contain, prepare for, respond to, and, recover from the potential effects of this emerging infectious epi/pandemic. A summary of the emergency plan will be shared later this week.

The SET noted that the infection was currently limited in South Africa and as such agreed that all University activities would continue as scheduled. They further agreed on the following:

- The establishment of a management committee to consistently monitor the COVID-19 outbreak, and to make recommendations to the SET around prevention, mitigation and the management of any COVID-19 incidents. This committee will also make recommendations on protocols that need to be implemented and academic continuity measures that need to be put in place, in conjunction with the Deans and other relevant constituencies. Led by the DVC: HR, Transformation and Advancement, the committee includes the Dean of Students, the Dean of the Faculty of Health Sciences, the Director: Occupational Health and Safety, the Director: Services, the Executive Director: Human Resources and the Head: Communications. Other members will be co-opted as required. The committee will convene its first meeting on Wednesday, 11 March 2020.
- Practical preventative measures are to be implemented immediately, including the temporary deactivation of the biometrics system, the installation of hand sanitisers in key areas, for example at entry and exit points of buildings and pedestrian gates and in bathrooms and lifts.
- Regular information will be shared with the Wits community via email, social media and a dedicated webpage. A feedback channel will be established to garner responses, comments and suggestions from staff and students. In addition, posters and digital platforms will be used to share content on preventative measures including good hygiene habits, the importance of washing hands properly, not sharing utensils and keeping a distance from people who are sneezing or coughing.
- The Dean of the Faculty of Health Sciences has communicated directly with students and staff in the Faculty, including those working in hospitals and healthcare facilities.
- Members of the Wits community are advised not to travel for non-essential purposes. If employees have no option but to travel internationally, they are requested to inform their respective Heads of School of their travel arrangements and proposed return dates. All members of the Wits community who are returning from international travel are required to inform their respective Heads of School at least 48 hours before they return to the country, so that the necessary protocols can be implemented before they return to campus (this may include a period of quarantine). Similarly, all students are required to inform the Dean of Students of their return from international travels.
- All Heads of School must be informed of any visitors who are to arrive at Wits from other countries, be it to attend conferences or to participate in other University activities. The Head of School must be informed BEFORE the visitor arrives. Heads of School will receive a separate communique and protocol to follow on how to manage COVID-19 matters when they are reported.
- All Human Resources and leave policies remain in effect. Employees who are showing signs of illness should take the appropriate sick leave. If the illness persists

and COVID-19 is suspected, then the employee will need to go for further tests and possibly be quarantined. This will be managed on a case by case basis.

Please remember the following:

1. The current status of COVID-19 in South Africa is no reason to panic
2. Exercise good hygiene practices such as washing your hands thoroughly and regularly as communicated previously
3. Report all international travellers to Heads of School, the Dean of Students or the relevant SET member
4. All incidents of COVID-19 should be reported immediately to the DVC: HR, Transformation and Advancement in the case of employees and to the Dean of Students, if it involves students. A protocol has been developed with the assistance of the NICD, to manage any case of COVID-19 or related outbreaks.

A summary of the emergency response plan will be shared later this week.

Thank you

**SENIOR EXECUTIVE TEAM**

**10 MARCH 2020**